

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 3074

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJ: ALLEGATIONS MADE BY JOHN DEAN TO NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE

REF: PANAMA 3062 BELL- THOMPSON TELECON

SUMMARY: FONMIN STATES GOP WILL DOWNPLAY ALLEGATIONS
AND AVOID MAKING GOVERNMENT- TO- GOVERNMENT PROBLEM OF THEM. I
ATTRIBUTE THIS TO GOP DESIRE FOR PROGRESS IN CANAL TREATY
NEGOTIATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. I CALLED ON FONMIN AT NOON AS ARRANGED LAST WEEK.

2. AFTER DISCUSSING SUBJECT FOR WHICH APPOINTMENT MADE
I INFORMED TACK OF NEW YORK TIMES STORY AND SPOKE AS
FOLLOWS:

A) I DEEPLY REGRET APPEARANCE OF SUCH A STORY.

B) I WOULD ASK THAT GOP KEEP IN MIND IT IS ONLY A
PRESS STORY AND THAT IT APPEARS IN A LARGER CONTEXT OF
COUNTLESS PRESS STORIES REPORTING INNUMERABLE ALLEGATIONS
FROM SOURCES OF QUESTIONABLE WORTH RELATED TO SO- CALLED
WATERGATE AFFAIR. DEPARTMENT HAS NO KNOWLEDGE CONCERNING
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THESE ALLEGATIONS.

C) THE WELL- KNOWN AND PUBLICLY DECLARED POLICY OF THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN AND REMAINS TO DEAL WITH GOVERNMENTS AS THEY ARE.

D) WITH REGARD TO PANAMA IN PARTICULAR, THE RECORD IS CLEAR: US HAS MAINTAINED CORDIAL AND FRUITFUL RELATIONS WITH THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT OF PANAMA OVER THE WHOLE RANGE OF GOVERNMENT- TO- GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY, AND FULLY EXPECTS TO CONTINUE TO DO SO.

E) IN LIGHT OF THE NATURE OF THIS PRESS STORY, THE KNOWN POLICY OF THIS ADMINISTRATION AND THE RECORD OF ITS DEALINGS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF PANAMA, I WOULD HOPE THAT IF A SPOKESMAN FOR THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT HAS TO COMMENT ON THE STORY, HE COULD DISMISS IT AS ABSURD IN LIGHT OF THE KNOWN FACTS.

3. FOREIGN MINISTER SHOWED ME TELEGRAM FROM THE PANAMANIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON REPORTING NEW YORK TIMES STORY AND SAID WASHINGTON EMBASSY HAD ALSO REPORTED BY TELEPHONE THAT STORY HAD ALSO APPEARED WASHINGTON EVENING STAR. HE SAID HE HAD ALREADY DISCUSSED MATTER WITH GEN. TORRIJOS. TACK SAID THAT AS FAR AS HE (TACK) IS CONCERNED, HE INTENDS TO TREAT MATTER AS PRESS STORY WHICH IS A MATTER OF US INTERNAL POLITICS. HE ASSURED ME HE HAD NO INTENTION OF MAKING IT INTO ANY KIND OF A PROBLEM BETWEEN OUR GOVERNMENTS.

4. TACK THEN ASKED THAT I REPORT ON A MATTER OF IMPORTANCE TO HIM: HE SAID THAT IN BUENOS AIRES HE HAD GIVEN SECRETARY ROGERS AN UNDERTAKING THAT HE WOULD AVOID PUBLIC COMMENT ON BOTH THE DETAILS AND THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. HE SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN OBLIGED TO SPEAK LAST FRIDAY EVENING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE FIRST CONGRESS OF MEXICO, CENTRAL AMERICA AND PANAMA FOR SOVEREIGNTY AND PEACE. IN A MEETING ON SUCH A TOPIC HE SAID HE WAS UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE TO ADDRESS HIMSELF TO OUR NEGOTIATIONS. NEVERTHELESS, HE HAD CAREFULLY REFRAINED FROM DOING SO AND HAD DEALT WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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THE SUBJECT COMPLETELY IN TERMS OF PHILOSOPHY. I SAID I HAD NOTED THAT WHEN I READ PRESS REPORTS OF HIS SPEECH. TACK SAID THAT SINCE THIS WAS THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY HE HAD HAD TO COMPLY WITH THIS COMMITMENT TO THE SECRETARY, HE WOULD LIKE THE SECRETARY TO KNOW THAT HE HAD DONE SO..

5. I THANKED THE FOREIGN MINISTER FOR HIS ASSURANCES THAT

THE NEW YORK TIMES STORY WOULD BE HANDLED IN A MATURE AND STATESMAN- LIKE WAY AND PROMISED TO REPORT AS HE HAD REQUESTED WITH REGARD TO HIS COMMITMENT TO SECRETARY ROGERS.

6. COMMENT: BY TACK' S ACCOUNT, THE GOP INTENDS TO DOWNPLAY THE NEW YORK STORY. I TAKE THIS TO MEAN THAT WE SHALL HAVE SOME GARISH HEADLINES AND UGLY COMMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT- CONTROLLED MEDIA BUT THE GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDA MACHINE WILL NOT BE TURNED ON AT FULL FORCE AND THE GOP WILL NOT ISSUE OFFICIAL STATEMENTS OF OUTRAGE. I BELIEVE THAT NOTHING I WAS ABLE TO SAY WAS VERY PERSUASIVE ON THIS SUBJECT. IT IS MY IMPRESSION THAT TACK WAS PREPARED TO GIVE ME THE ASSURANCE HE DID HAD I NOT RAISED THE MATTER. HOWEVER THAT MAY BE, IF THE GOP IS IN FACT ABLE TO RESIST THE ALMOST OVERWHELMING TEMPTATION TO LASH OUT AT US ON THIS ISSUE, IT WILL BE ENTIRELY BECAUSE THE GOP HAS DECIDED THAT IT NEEDS PROGRESS ON THE CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATION FRONT AND THAT THIS REQUIRES THAT IT TEMPER ITS BEHAVIOR TOWARD THE US.
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